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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Monday, June 12, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "HOSE THAT FIT." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

I had a good laugh over a cartoon the other day. Two people were pictured in a restaurant, talking about a woman at another table. The man said, "That woman over there is Mrs. So-and-So, who wrote the latest Book-of-the-Month." Said the girl, "Is being a famous author any reason why she can't pull up her stockings so they won't wrinkle?"

Well, it's my guess that the famous lady's stockings didn't fit, and maybe she was too busy writing her "book-of-the-month" to inform herself about another important book-of-last-month that I reported on a short time ago. I mean the one issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture as Miscellaneous Publication No. 342 -- by Margaret Smith of the Bureau of Home Economics. It's called "Hosiery for Women--A Buying Guide" -- and it costs ten cents.....not very much considering the average woman's hosiery bill!

In this publication Miss Smith uses many pictures to show the details of well-made, well-fitting, long-wearing hose. And that doesn't mean only silk hose. She discusses cotton, wool, rayon, and mixtures.

Fit depends a good deal on how the hose are made, and also on getting the right size, Miss Smith says. Stockings must be long enough in the legs as well as in the feet, and wide enough at the top.

Taking construction first: Hose are commonly made either full-fashioned or circular knit. "Full-fashioned" means knit to fit. The knee, calf, ankle, and heel are shaped by dropping stitches. There's a genuine seam at the back.

The full-fashioned stocking has a full-fashioned toe and heel. That is to say, the stitches are looped (or closed) at the end of the toe; and you can see where stitches have been dropped at the triangular section to shape the toe. This gives a comfortable fit.

The back seam of the stocking runs all the way down the heel and the foot. Stitches are dropped to shape the instep and heel just as they were to shape the calf of the leg and the ankle. Where stitches have been dropped you can see "fashion marks" like little knots at regular intervals.

Another thing about full-fashioned heels is that the ribs or wales of the knitting run vertically down the back of the heel, continuing the up and down direction of the leg construction. In making full-fashioned hose, generally two machines are used -- a "legger" and a "footer". Many are now made on one machine. Across the ankle the last stitches on the legger are picked up by hand and transferred to the footer. This is a very delicate job requiring expert operators.

Now, in circular knit hose, the whole stocking is made in one piece, knitted like a tube, without any seam. The tension of the knitting is increased to shape the calf, ankle, and foot. Tuck stitches are sometimes added to imitate fashion marks. Such hose have either a mock seam or no seam at all. Many circular knit hose are merely boarded into a shape, which they lose when washed.

I very much suspect that the famous lady author had on a pair of circular knit hose, possibly after they'd been washed, so there were wrinkles across the instep and at other points and nothing could ever be done about it.

Such stockings may not even have been very comfortable. The circular knit toe probably had stitches looped at the top, where they added thickness inside the shoe, and there may have been other lumpy places where the mock seam extended part way down the heel.

Another way to spot circular knit hose is by the heel. The heel is knit at right angles, and the wales or ribs run around the heel and have a diagonal

seam where the shape is completed.

So much for the construction features that make hose fit or not fit. It seems as if anyone would want to buy correct foot sizes, but not everyone knows that a stocking should generally be half an inch longer than the foot. If the foot is very narrow a shorter stocking may fit better, but this is the exception rather than the rule. When stocking feet are too long, they wrinkle at the toes, or across the instep, or pull up at the heel. And of course stockings that are too short cramp the toes or pull down under the heel until an indignant big toe asserts itself by poking through.

In brands of hosiery that are well known you can generally depend on sizes running as marked. Size 9 should be 9 inches long. When you buy unknown or unmarked brands, be on the safe side by checking foot length on a ruler.

Many brands of stockings are made in three leg lengths -- short, medium, and long. The medium or standard length is 31 inches. If hose are too long, the garters must be fastened below the welt, which is designed and reinforced to take them. Then they start runs. Too-short hose are tight over the knee and soon develop breaks and runs.

The large-limbed ladies, who have trouble getting stockings that are comfortable and that wear well, no doubt need either outsize hose or hose with extra-stretch tops. The latter are made for those whose legs are large at the knee or above it. But while small women can often wear misses' sizes in dresses, misses' hose won't do for grown women because such hose are knit smaller and straighter in the leg than regular hose intended to cover fully developed calves.

There's a lot more in Miscellaneous Publication 342 on selecting the right hosiery. I am sure most of you will want to send ten cents to the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C., and receive a copy of your own. Send a dime, not stamps, and ask for "Hosiery for Women--A Buying Guide."

